This course will provide students interested in writing a novel an awareness of the various techniques available to them and to help them develop their own approach to novel writing. We will examine every aspect of the craft of novel writing: plot, structure, point of view, narrative voice, dialogue, building of individual scenes, etc. Students will learn to study texts from the unique perspective of a writer. The class will become a community of writers working in a safe, honest and considerate environment, presenting their own fiction, responding to the writing of others, and discussing questions about literature, editing, and publishing. Each student will write a novel outline and two chapters. Reading assignments will include works by a variety of classic and contemporary authors, such as Jane Austen, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Junot Diaz, and Jennifer Egan.

Course Objectives

The students will study existing methods for writing the novel, and learn how to apply them to their creative work.

Creative Work

The first assignment (one of the chapters ---1000 to 1500 words in length) AND the outline are going to be the pieces that you will present in class for critique by other students. I will divide the class in three groups and assign the dates for presentation. For the first group the assignment is due in two-three weeks.

The second assignment ( a longer chapter -- 1500-2000 words not necessarily from the same novel as the first chapter) is due two weeks before the end of our class.

The homework and in-class assignments will include research and field work. Some of them will involve movies, paintings and photographs; others, real-life material. You will present some of them in-class.

Required Texts

Junot Diaz, Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao

Jane Austen, Emma

Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Crime and Punishment

Jennifer Egan, Visit From a Goon Squad
(I will also introduce some short stories and other novels to get the students familiar with them and encourage them to read them later.)

**Reading discussions**

You should email me two comments about each assigned piece (anything that struck you as a writer-reader) no later than the night before the class. The comments should be from the point of view of a fellow writer.

I assume that you read a lot on your own. I encourage you to involve books that you read on your own in our discussions.

**Critiques**

You are required to read and critique every manuscript that is presented in workshop by class members. You should write your questions/comments to the writer and send them to me in an email prior to class when the work is going to be presented.

**Grades**

Your final grade will be based on all of your written work, especially the progress you make; the quality and frequency of your classroom participation; and your overall effort and investment in sustaining a productive workshop. I do not give a mid-term grade, but I will let you know how you are doing and what you should do to improve.

**Academic integrity**

As a Gallatin student you belong to an interdisciplinary community of artists and scholars who value honest and open intellectual inquiry. This relationship depends on mutual respect, responsibility, and integrity. Failure to uphold these values will be subject to severe sanction, which may include dismissal from the University. Examples of behaviors that compromise the academic integrity of the Gallatin School include plagiarism, illicit collaboration, doubling or recycling coursework, and cheating.

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**Week 1**

**January 29**

What is a novel?

**Fictional Introduction**

Different critical perspectives/Perspective of a fellow writer

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**Week 2**

Creating fictional characters

**February 5**
Texts: Diaz

Movie: Ozon

Week 3/4. Plot/elements of plot /plot devices
February 12-19

Texts: Diaz
Movie: Separation, Pulp Fiction

Week 5-6 Structure

February 26
March-5

Texts: Emma

Movies: Memento

Week 7 Individual Scenes/narrative passages/pacing
March 12

Texts: Dostoyevsky

Spring break field assignment: due March 25th (see Assignments)

Week 8 Dialog
March 26

Texts: Dostoyevsky

Week 9 Description
April 2

Texts: Dostoevsky

Week 10 Setting
April 2

Texts: Dostoevsky

Week 11 Point of view
April 16
Texts: Egan

Week 12
April 23  Revision

Texts: Egan

***Hand in your second chapter (due April 24th-May 1st)

Week 13-14 Writing Fiction in the Digital Age
Originality, Experiments, Business of Writing

April 30- May7

Texts: Egan